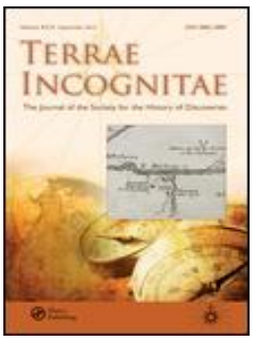

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Raynald Laprise

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The Privateers of Saint-Domingue and Louis XIV's Designs on Spanish America, 1683-1685

Raynald Laprise

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Introduction

Toward the mid-1680s, some 2000 to 3000 men of the French colony of Saint-Domingue—approximately one-fourth of the colony's population—lived on plunder from the seas and coastal settlements of Spanish America. These men were businessmen at war, fitting out at their own expense. Whereas the French called them *flibustiers*, their victims described them as *piratas* or *ladrones*. Actually, they were corsairs or privateers,[1] justifying their piratical raids by legal authorizations or commissions. These were granted by their government in time of war or peace. At their zenith, these privateers formed an inexpensive but unruly naval strength for France, and thus found themselves caught up in the aggressive designs of King Louis XIV on Spanish America. The Sun King's cupidity was aroused by the Spanish exile Diego de Peñalosa, who promised to make France the master of Nueva Vizcaya (a rich mining province in northern Mexico) by employing a force of Saint-Domingue privateers. Such a project was the brainchild of the Sulpician abbot Claude Bernou, who claimed expert knowledge of New World geography. Bernou hoped to combine Peñalosa's scheme with that of René-Robert Cavelier, sieur de La Salle, who at that time was seeking backers for planting a colony on the Mississippi River.[2] Thus, the privateers of Saint-Domingue became linked to La Salle. Even though the privateeers had no active part in the French explorer's last expedition, they were constantly in the background, diverting Spanish attention from La Salle's incursion with unrelated ravages of their own. And then, by strange coincidence, it was they who revealed La Salle's Gulf of Mexico expedition to the Spaniards.[3] The purpose of this paper is to reconsider these events in the light of correspondence between the governor of Saint-Domingue and his superiors in France.[4]

The Privateers and the Nouvelle-Biscaye Venture

The Saint-Domingue colony, comprising present-day Haiti, originated with bands of adventurers, mostly French, who began hunting wild cattle in the western part of Hispaniola as early as the 1630s. These cow-killers, called *boucaniers* by the French, used firearms to slaughter the beasts for their hides, which were highly prized by the tanneries of Normandy. Within

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[1] The French word *flilbustier* derives from both the Dutch *Vrijbuiter* and the English "freebooter." In the seventeenth century the English term was synonymous with "pirate," a robber at sea, unlike the French *flibustier*, used to designate a corsair in the Americas. Hence, to avoid confusion, these men will be designated herein simply as privateers, the word the English commonly applied to their own *flibustiers*, as well as those of foreigners.

[2] The links between Peñalosa, Bernou, and La Salle are discussed in Robert S. Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle, the Ruin of La Salle* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), p. 83-103; and also in Jean Delanglez, *Some La Salle Journeys*, (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit History, 1938), p. 65-99.

[3] "Testimonio de la causa criminal que fulminó el almirante Don Antonio de Astina, a los piratas que apresó la Armada de Barlovento entre el Cabo de Cotoche y el Alacrán, de los que robaron a Campeche," Archivo General de Indias, Indiferente General 2548, no. 20 (cited herein as "Causa criminal"). This certified copy of the original was annexed to a letter from the viceroy of Mexico, dated February 20, 1686. I am much indebted to Jacques Gasser of Alsace (France), who has made a 30-year study of the history of the "flibustiers." He generously shared with me this important document, as well as some others that have been helpful in the present study..

[4] The documents used herein belong to four sub-series of the "Fonds ancien des Colonies" preserved in the Centre des archives d'Outre-Mer (Archives nationales de France): "Correspondance à l'arrivée: Saint-Domingue et Îles sous le Vent" (herein CAOM COL-C9A); "Documents divers: Collection Moreau de Saint-Méry" (CAOM COL-F3); "Correspondance au départ: Canada - Îles d'Amérique" (CAOM COL-B); and "Correspondance à l'arrivée: Martinique et Îles du Vent" (CAOM COL-C8A).

thirty years, they numbered as many as one thousand. Between hunts, these marksmen of great repute often embarked on privateer ships that harbored on the island. In theory, they belonged to the Île de la Tortue, the first French settlement of Hispaniola, situated on a tiny island off the northwest shore. The Tortue settlement diminished as the *boucaniers* began to settle down and grow tobacco along the west coast of the great island, called "la côte de Saint-Domingue," which offered better harbors for the privateers.[5]

The settlement of Saint-Domingue was primarily the work of one man, Bertrand Ogeron, who served as governor of the French colony from 1665 to 1676. He recruited several hundred men each year, mostly from his native province of Anjou, to plant tobacco. Some came as landowners, others as indentured servants. At the same time, Ogeron encouraged privateering against the Spaniards. Thus, by 1670, Saint-Domingue had acquired a small fleet, manned by some five hundred men, among them many hunters and planters who joined the full-time privateers during the off season or when an exceptional opportunity presented itself.

In Jamaica at that time, the English had four times as many privateers and the island was well situated at the crossroads of sea lanes serving the principal Spanish colonies; from the start, it was well supplied with immigrants and money from home, unlike Saint-Domingue, which was long neglected by France. In fifteen years, from 1670 to 1685, however, the situation changed completely.

Conforming with the Treaty of Madrid, the King of England in 1670 decreed an end to all hostilities against the Spaniards in America. Accordingly, several Jamaican seamen, refusing to forsake their old trade, found employment among the French in Saint-Domingue. Indeed, in 1673, when Spain joined forces with the United Provinces of the Netherlands in their war against France, it gave privateering a new lease on life. Thenceforth, Jamaica contributed greatly to the rise of privateering based in Saint-Domingue, with men, shipping, and money, the whole with complicity of notables such as Sir Henry Morgan.[6] Toward the midpoint of the war, Saint-Domingue could count a thousand full-time privateers. Paradoxically, when the war ended, this number doubled or trebled.[7]

Although France made peace with Spain in 1679, Louis XIV allowed Jacques Nepveu, sieur de Pouancey, Ogeron's nephew and successor, to commission reprisals. These commissions were granted on the condition that prizes taken under such authority be adjudicated only in Saint-Domingue; not even in another French colony.[8] Saint-Domingue was the only one of the French

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[5] Michel-Christian Camus, *L'île de la Tortue au coeur de la Flibuste caraïbe* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1997), p. 27-70.

[6] Camus, *L'île de la Tortue.* pp. 47-51, 63-83. Concerning Jamaica as a privateer stronghold, see Michael Pawson and David Buisseret, *Port Royal, Jamaica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975): p. 20-36; also Nuala Zahediah, "A Frugal, Prudential and Hopeful Trade: Privateering in Jamaica, 1665-1689," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 18, no 2 (May 1990): 145-168.

[7] In May 1671, there were 500 privateers. Six years later, there were about one thousand. In a census dated May 1681, the whole colony (including women and children as well as slaves) numbered 7,748 individuals, among whom were about 1,100 privateers. In 1684, their number was estimated between 2,000 and 3,000 (documents preserved in CAOM COL-C9A 1).

[8] Minister Colbert to Pouancey, Fontainebleau, 8 June 1680, CAOM COL-B 9, f. 131. The intendant of the Isles d'Amérique was also advised of this; Colbert to Jean-Baptiste Patoulet, Fontainebleau, 2 June 1680, CAOM COL-B 9, f. 101. This condition was necessary to protect the French trade in America as well as the Saint-Domingue settlers' own interests. Indeed, since Spanish prize goods (cocoa, cochineal, indigo, logwood, sugar, tobacco and hides) could be bought from privateers at very low rates, there were large profits to be made by the colonial merchants and their associates at home. Part of these profits then could be invested in sugar or indigo plantations, the beginning of which required more capital than that of tobacco.

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West Indies colonies to have this royal favor, for two reasons: on the one hand, it was far removed from the others and lay near Spanish and English bases, with neither a naval station nor a fortress, so that the privateers remained its only armed force; on the other, privateering meant survival for the poorest settlers, who, suffering the decline in tobacco prices, could scarcely make a living without it. (Tobacco was virtually the colony's only product for export.)[9] The advantages of privateering, however, were not apparent to everyone. The sea rovers' depredations in peacetime, for example, disrupted the lucrative trade in precious metals and other products that French merchants enjoyed in Seville. It was no secret that France and other European countries benefited more from the wealth of Spanish America than did Spain itself.[10] In the other French West Indies colonies, privateering also had its opponents; notably, from governor-general of the Isles d'Amérique himself, Charles de Courbon, Count of Blénac. Blénac, well known for his support of direct trade with the Spanish colonies, saw little value in the governor of Saint-Domingue and his gang of pirates. Even the privateers' resounding strike on Veracruz in 1683, though carried out during a time of cold war and just before the outbreak of a new conflict, was viewed negatively because of its upsetting influence on this trade. Thus, the episode provided forceful arguments for the privateers' detractors to use against them.[11]

In the perspective of free trade with Spain and her colonies, the use of the privateers who did not own lands in Saint-Domingue to conquer and colonize remote Nueva Vizcaya seemed an apt solution. Thus, in 1681-1682, Abbot Bernou took advantage of Governor Pouancey's presence in France to advance Peñalosa's scheme.[12] Following the deterioration of Franco-Spanish relations, which led to the war in October 1683, the Nouvelle-Biscaye (Nueva Vizcaya) project was well received both by the king and the Marquis of Seignelay, Secretary of State for colonial affairs.[13] However, before giving his final approval, Louis XIV wanted an unbiased opinion touching the employment of the Saint-Domingue privateers in the venture. At the end of September 1683, he charged the intendant of the Isles d'Amérique, Michel Bégon, and sieur de Saint-Laurent, a knight of Malta, governor of the French part of Saint Kitts' and Governor Blénac's deputy, to assess the matter and inspect the colony.[14] The same month, he appointed a new governor of Saint-Domingue to succeed Pouancey, who had died earlier that year. His choice was Pierre-Paul Tarin, sieur de Cussy of Anjou, whose father had been a tutor of King Louis XIII.[15] Cussy, recruited by Ogeron, had come to the colony about 1665. Ogeron later

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[9] Memoir of the militia officers in council, Saint-Domingue, 5 May 1681, CAOM COL-C9A 1. On the economic importance of privateering for this colony, see Philippe Hrodej, "La flibuste domingoise à la fin du XVIIe siècle : une composante économique indispensable," in Michel Le Bris, comp., *L'aventure de la flibuste* (Paris: Hoëbeke Éditions, 2002), p. 289-312. The importance of tobacco is discussed in Stewart L. Mims, *Colbert's West India Policy* (New York: Octagon Books, 1977; reprint), p. 252-59.

[10] Seignelay to Blénac, Saint-Laurent and Bégon, Versailles, 1 May 1685, CAOM COL-B 11, ff. 160-65.

[11] Blénac and Dumatz de Goimpy to the king, Martinique, 30 Sept. 1685, CAOM Col-C8A 4, ff. 52-60.

The Veracruz expedition is told from the Spanish point of view in David F. Marley, *Sack of Veracruz: The Great Pirate Raid of 1683* (Windsor, Ontario: Netherlandic Press, 1993). Details are added by Jacques Gasser, "Les mystérieuses disparitions de Grammont," in *L'aventure de la flibuste*, p. 211-259.

[12] Bernou to Eusèbe Renaudot, Rome, 11 April 1684, in Pierre Margry, ed., *Découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'ouest et dans le sud de l'Amérique septentrionale (1614-1698)* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1879), vol. 3, p. 84.

[13] Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Marquis of Seignelay (1651-1690) succeeded his father of the same name as Secretary of State in charge of King's House, City of Paris, Clergy and Navy (Colonies being a part of this last department). Seignelay became associated with this office in 1672 and became a full King's minister in 1689. The elder Colbert died in 1683. See François Bluche, *Louis XIV* (Paris: Fayard, 1986), p 951-953.

[14] Louis XIV to Saint-Laurent and Bégon, Fontainebleau, 24 Sept 1683, CAOM COL-B 10, ff. 20-22.

[15] "Commission de gouverneur de l'île de la Tortue et côte de Saint-Domingue pour le sieur Tarin de Cussy," 30 Sept 1683, CAOM COL-B 10, f. 51.

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appointed him his deputy at Tortue.[16] He also had taken command of some privateering ventures against the Spaniards during the previous war. When Ogeron returned to France in 1675, Cussy was given overall command of the northern settlements of Saint-Domingue.[17] The following year, on Ogeron's death, he expected to succeed him, but the king favored Pouancey.[18] This first rebuff had been followed by another: when Louis XIV gave the colony its first king's lieutenant in 1679, he awarded this office to Jacques de Pardieu, sieur de Franquesnay, a former musketeer who had lived in America since the 1660's.[19] Nevertheless, the following year, Pouancey himself put forward Cussy as the more able man in the colony to perform the duties of king's lieutenant.[20] At the end of 1681, Cussy accompanied the governor to France, where he made recommendations for the improvement of Peñalosa's proposal.[21]

In March 1684, shortly before his departure for Saint-Domingue, Cussy received an order to gather all the privateers by the end of the year, because the king was ready to attempt the conquest of Nueva Vizcaya.[22] He surely understood that under his friend Bernou's influence the Peñalosa project had been joined with the new venture of La Salle, who was back in France after exploring the Mississippi River to its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico.[23] But neither Louis XIV nor Seignelay seriously considered that the sea rovers under the command of a Spanish renegade could succeed in this venture alone. La Salle, to whom the king granted full power to colonize "Louisiane," would be the vanguard; the privateers would be the auxiliaries of a royal squadron commanded by Count Jean d'Estrées, vice-admiral and marshal of France. Peñalosa was to embark with d'Estrées as guide. The whole business had to be a well-kept secret, for d'Estrées himself refused to confirm La Salle's understanding in the matter.[24] Nevertheless, the rumor was so persistent in Paris that even the English ambassador was informed of it.[25] Whatever the plan, La Salle set sail from Rochefort on August 1 (having sailed first from La Rochelle and being forced by accident to return). At the time, negotiations between France and Spain were progressing in Ratisbon; unknown to La Salle, peace had been signed on August 15. There was no further mention of sending d'Estrées to America.

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[16] E-mail of Dr. Jacques Ducoin, associate member, Unité mixte de Service. Histoire et Archéologie maritime, 22 January 2004.

[17] Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole ou Saint-Domingue,* (Paris: François Barois, 1736), vol. 1, book 8.

[18] "Commission de gouverneur de l'île de la Tortue et côte de Saint-Domingue pour le sieur de Pouancey," 16 March 1676, CAOM COL-B 7, f. 14.

[19] "Provision de lieutenant du roi au gouvernement de l'île de la Tortue et de Saint-Domingue pour le sieur de Franquesnay," 20 April 1679, CAOM COL-B 9, f. 35. In the French colonies, a king's lieutenant was a military officer whose rank was second to the governor's and could act as his deputy.

[20] Count d'Estrées to Seignelay, Saint-Domingue, 7 Sept 1680, M. Momerqué, *Mémoires du Marquis de Villette* (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1864), p. 218-219.

[21] This is inferred from Bernou's letter to Renaudot of 11 April 1684.

[22] Seignelay to Cussy, 4 March 1684, Margry, *Découvertes,* vol. 2, p. 377.

[23] Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle,* p. 83-103; also Delanglez, *Some La Salle Journeys,* p. 65-99.

[24] De Beaujeu to de Villermont, Rochefort, 5, 15 and 18 June 1684, Margry, *Découvertes,* vol. 2, p. 428, 435-437. D'Estrées had commanded royal squadrons in the Caribbean Sea in 1669-70, 1676-77, 1677-78, 1679, and 1680. See Charles de La Roncière, *Histoire de la marine française* (Paris: E. Plon, 1934), vol. 5, p. 487-488, 647-665, 697-705. In 1686, he was granted the honorific title of "vice-roi d'Amérique."

[25] Lord Preston to Lord Sunderland, Paris, 17 and 19 June 1684, *Seventh Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscript* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1879), p. 306, 309. Peñalosa is mentioned by name in Preston's first letter.

Saint-Domingue, 1684

On May 1, 1684, Cussy landed at Petit-Goâve, in the cul-de-sac on the west coast of Saint-Domingue, the privateers' main port of call. He found the inhabitants of the port and the surrounding settlements on the verge of revolt. The fault lay with King's Lieutenant Franquesnay, who had temporarily taken over as governor following Pouancey's death.[26] By his ambiguous policy, Franquesnay had alienated not only the gathering mob but also the most substantial settlers and militia officers, all of whom benefited directly or indirectly from privateering. Initially, he had wanted to punish the captains returning from Veracruz, because they had spent a good part of their spoils in Jamaica and had neglected to pay their commissioning fees, a tenth of their booty. Two hundred privateers and planters had come to Franquesnay's house and threatened to kill him, forcing him to abandon his threatened harsh measures. Moreover, Spanish privateers from Santiago de Cuba had plundered plantations and shipping belonging to the colony, aggressions that required immediate redress. Thereupon, Franquesnay, setting aside his conflict with the privateers, authorized a raid on Santiago. But, once at sea, the privateers broke apart because of some disagreement with their commander-in-chief, Jean Le Goff, sieur de Beauregard, the highest ranking militia officer of the colony. Most of the captains then chose the famous Dutch adventurer Laurens de Graff as their new general and followed him to the coast of Cartagena.[27] The other captains returned to Petit-Goâve, gathered some three hundred men, and soon departed in five small ships for the Orinoco River to attack Santo Tomás de la Guayana with the help of Carib Indians.[28] Rejecting Franquesnay's control, this last fleet put in at Sainte-Croix, whose governor, sieur de La Saulaye, exceeding his authority, granted them commissions of war against the Spanish and the Dutch.[29]

In response to these challenges to his authority, Franquesnay outlawed all the privateers, so that Cussy found at Petit-Goâve only sieur de Grammont and two other captains who were willing to sail again without the consent of the king's lieutenant. From the point of view of Cussy and others, Grammont was the right man to carry out royal orders pertaining to privateers.[30] A corsair captain in America for about ten years, Grammont had distinguished himself in 1678 by leading seven hundred men in the plunder of Spanish settlements at Lake Maracaibo; again in 1680 by storming La Guayra, the seaport of Caracas; and more recently, in 1683, as lieutenant of the late Nicholas Van Hoorn in the taking of Veracruz. In addition to his qualities of military leader, much appreciated by Vice-Admiral d'Estrées and others, he was a nobleman, a matter of some importance at that time. Bernou expected him to be Peñalosa's second-in-command in the conquest of Nueva Vizcaya.[31] The governor undoubtedly discussed this ven-

[26] Extract of a letter from Cussy, 29 June 1684, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[27] These events are told in Gasser, "Les mystérieuses disparitions de Grammont," citing French, English and Spanish documents.

[28] Diego Suárez Ponce de León to Juan de Gadea, Trinidad, 4 Oct. 1684, British Library, Additional Manuscript 36331, Venezuela Papers vol. XVIII, ff. 48v-53v.

[29] Abstract of letters from Cussy to Blénac, 7 Sept. 1684 and 8 Jan. 1685;. Saint-Laurent and Bégon to the king, Martinique, 24 Feb. 1684, both in CAOM COL-C9A 1; Seignelay to Blénac and Bégon, Versailles, 29 July 1684, CAOM COL-B 11, f. 63; Bégon to Seignelay, Martinique, 25 Jan. 1685, CAOM COL-C8A 4, ff. 26-30; Seignelay to La Saulaye, Versailles, 1 April 1685, CAOM COL-B 11, f. 148.

[30] Extract of Cussy's letter of June 29; Cussy's memoir to Seignelay, 24 Aug. 1684, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[31] Pouancey to Seignelay, Saint-Domingue, 9 Jan. 1679, CAOM COL-C9A 1; d'Estrées to Seignelay, Brest, 10 April 1679, Centre historique des Archives nationales (France), Fonds ancien de la Marine, B4 8, f. 386; same to same, Caicos, 7 Sept. 1680, CAOM COL-F3 164 f. 355; "Mémoire sur les affaires de l'Amérique," January 1684, Margry, *Découvertes*, vol. 3, pp. 48-60. Grammont's origins are still uncertain; even his first name is unknown.. He probably belonged to that ancient Grammont family from Gascony, whose oldest branch owned the titles of Count of Guiche, Prince of Bidache and Duke of Grammont.

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ture with Grammont and is known to have discussed his own project with the privateer captain. Indeed Cussy, his collaboration and friendship with Bernou notwithstanding, was first and foremost the follower of his predecessor Ogeron; the consolidation of the colony extended through the conquest of Spanish Hispaniola, primarily its capital, Santo Domingo. This venture could easily be carried out if Grammont managed to gather all the privateers by the end of the year. Then, if such was still the king's will, part of the privateers could be employed to make Louis XIV master of Nouvelle-Biscaye.[32]

Meanwhile, Cussy was advised that Saint-Laurent and Bégon were soon to arrive in Saint-Domingue. Leaving Grammont and others to whom he had promised commissions, he went at once to visit the northern settlements, mainly Port-de-Paix, where the spirits were calmer. On July 1, news that De Graff and two other privateers had just arrived on the west coast brought him back to Petit-Goâve. Laurens de Graff was one of the best sailors in the Americas, and Franquesnay's policy had driven him to negotiate with the governor of Jamaica to enter into the service of England. Being aware of this, Cussy intended to bind the Dutchman to the colony and France. Upon his return to Petit-Goâve, toward July 7, Cussy gave commissions to Grammont and four other captains, with instructions to bring back all the privateers.[33] To make his voyage profitable, Grammont then proposed to Cussy a raid on Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. To carry out this venture, he expected to find around Venezuela at least four hundred privateers, mostly those who had left for Orinoco earlier that year. But first, with the five ships at his disposal and some six hundred men, he would go to the northern coast of Cuba to join two large vessels carrying four hundred others: De Graff's own ship and that of his associate, Captain Michel Andresson, both of whom the Dutchman had left on guard off Havana.[34] However, to maintain good relations with his Jamaican counterpart, Cussy deprived Grammont of one Joseph Bannister, commander of a large merchantman of about five hundred tons burden, whom the governor denied a commission, as he had done to two other English captains some weeks earlier at Port-de-Paix. To Grammont, however, Cussy's refusal was of no concern. Once at sea he incorporated Bannister into his fleet and promised to obtain a commission for him later.[35]

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[32] Extract of Cussy's letter of June 29, CAOM COL-C9A 1. Concerning the great confidence Cussy placed in Grammont, see Bernou to Renaudot, Rome, 22 Feb. 1684, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits (division occidentale): Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, vol. 9331, p. 224. For Ogeron's project, see Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'île Espagnole.*

[33] Memoir of Cussy, 24 Aug. 1684, CAOM COL-C9A 1. Documents relative to De Graff's negotiation with Jamaican officials are abstracted in J. W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and West Indies, 1681-1685* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, for Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1898) vol. 1, nos. 1210, 1249, 1649, 1718, 1839 (hereinafter CSPCS 1681-85).

[34] "Mémoire des pertes et exactions que les habitants de l'île Saint-Domingue ont souffertes par l'injustice et la mauvaise conduite du sieur de Cussy, gouverneur de la même île," n.p., n.d., Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits (division occidentale): Collection Clairambault, vol. 888, ff. 208-221 (hereinafter "Mémoire des pertes et exactions"); other important communication from Gasser. In his official letters, Cussy never mentioned this design against Caracas. In fact, as will be seen, he did all he could to conceal the mistakes of his friend and associate Grammont. De Graff, being ill and, having left his vessel *Le Neptune* and Andresson's *La Mutine* off Cuba, came to Saint-Domingue on board his most recent Spanish prize, *La Cascarille.* See Cussy's memorial of 24 Aug. 1684, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[35] Memoir of Cussy, 24 Aug. 1684, CAOM COL-C9A 1; also Lieutenant Governor Molesworth to Lord Sunderland, Jamaica, 30 Aug.-9 Sept. 1684, National Archives of the UK: PRO CO 1/55 no. 28. Bannister's career is well summarized in Pawson and Buisseret, *Port Royal,* p. 53-55.

As for De Graff, Cussy took him into his service to act as coast-guard for a while and, under his escort, set out again toward the northern coast. Early in August, at Le Cap, he met with Saint-Laurent and Bégon, who had just arrived from Martinique. The two officials needed only a few weeks to answer the king's question: the privateers were so directly linked to Saint-Domingue that using any of them to form a new settlement in Nueva Vizcaya would bring about the ruin of the colony. Cussy also drew up a report of all the privateers then at sea. They numbered 1,875 men, more than the half of them landowners in the colony; they had 17 ships, of which one-third were of 150 to 400 tons burden.[36] Soon afterward, Cussy received from Governor Blénac at Martinique blank commissions under the seal of the Admiral of France, to become effective for six months on September 18. In the past, the Saint-Domingue privateeers, whether in actual war or nominal peace, had fitted out only on authorizations from their own governor.[37] This innovation may have been legally necessary, since Saint-Laurent and Bégon had also come to arm the privateers for the taking of Spanish Santo Domingo.[38] Although no order to this effect, from either Louis XIV or Seignelay, is found, Cussy as well as his superiors in the Lesser Antilles could have received the support of both the king and his Secretary of State to carry out this venture as long as the war lasted.

Meanwhile, on September 27, the king's vessel *Le Joli*, carrying Cavelier de La Salle, dropped anchor at Petit-Goâve. Five days later, on October 2, two of the three other ships of the Mississippi expedition also anchored there in company of the privateer vessel *Le Tigre*, captained by François Le Sage, coming from Venezuela.[39] Captain Taneguy Le Gallois de Beaujeu, *Joli's* commander, took advantage of Le Sage's presence and that of another privateer captain named Duchesne, who had plundered Tampico the previous year, to gather information on the location of Mississippi River.[40] On October 20, Saint-Laurent and Bégon, accompanied by Cussy and Franquesnay, arrived at Petit-Goâve.[41] They assisted La Salle as best they could and they confirmed for him the loss of his fourth ship, the ketch *Saint-François* from La Rochelle, to two Spanish privateers off Port-de-Paix.[42] On November 8, these officials left for the neighboring settlement of Léogâne, where they continued their inspection.[43] Before La Salle's departure, only one other privateer returned to Petit-Goâve: about November 18, the Dutch captain Jan

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[36] Saint-Laurent and Bégon to the king, Le Cap, 26 Aug. 1684; Cussy to Seignelay, 24 Aug. 1684, both in CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[37] Cussy to Seignelay, 12 May 1685, CAOM COL-F3 164, f. 422. See also Saint-Laurent and Bégon, "Mémoire concernant les abus des armements des flibustiers," Martinique, 25 Jan. 1685, ibid., f. 450.

[38] Jean-Baptiste Minet, "Journal de notre voyage au golfe du Mexique," National Archives of Canada, MG18-B19, p. 10. An English translation of this document by Ann Linda Bell is found in Robert S. Weddle, et al., eds., *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf: Three Primary Documents* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), p. 83-126.

[39] The arrival of this privateer, whose name was not mentioned, is told in "Relation de Henri Joutel," Margry, *Découvertes*, vol. 3, p. 99; and in *La Belle's* logbook, dated 2 Oct. 1684, at Petit-Goâve. Two pages of the logbook are reproduced in Charles W. Hackett, ed., *Historical Documents relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and approaches thereto, to 1773* (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1926), vol. 2, p. 475, 477. The identification of Le Sage is from my own analysis of Cussy's report of 24 Aug. 1684.

[40] Beaujeu to Seignelay, Petit-Goâve, 20 Oct. 1684, Margry, *Découvertes*, vol. 2, pp. 485-492; and Minet, "Journal," p. 11-12.

[41] Minet, "Journal," p. 8.

[42] Saint-Laurent and Bégon to the king, Martinique, 25 Jan. 1685, CAOM COL-F3 164, ff. 403-405; see also Joutel, "Relation," p. 100. One of the two privateers, a pirogue of two guns and 54 men, brought their prize (the ketch *Saint-François*) into Santiago de Cuba on September 28 (Deposition of Samuel Kempthorn, Jamaica, 14-24 Nov. 1684, abstracted in CSPCS 1681-85, no. 1938v).

[43] Anonymous letter, Petit-Goâve, 14 Nov. 1684, Margry, *Découvertes*, vol. 2, p. 497.

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Willems, alias Yankey, came in with De Graff, who had been sent on patrol towards the island's southwestern shore.[44] On November 22, De Graff himself set sail again, for the north coast, to escort the merchant vessel that was to return Saint-Laurent and Bégon to Martinique. Once this mission was completed, he proceeded to Venezuela to join Grammont.[45] On the 25th, La Salle's two ships and their escort, *Le Joli*, weighed anchor, bound for the Gulf of Mexico.

Some of La Salle's men chose to stay at Petit-Goâve, among them his infantry captain, sieur de Valigny, who was too old and sick to make the voyage. Some indentured servants deserted.[46] Others who were not bound by contract with the explorer refused to reembark. Among these was Denis Thomas, a young soldier of twenty years. A native of Longueville, in Normandy, he was one of the pages of Louis-Armand de Bourbon, prince of La Roche-sur-Yon and Marquis of Graville, whose elder brother (Prince de Conti) had introduced La Salle to the king in 1675. Having received from his master a one-year leave, Thomas had embarked at La Rochelle as a volunteer on *Le Joli*. It was he who was to inform the Spaniards of La Salle's designs on Spanish territory and details of his planned incursion. He was also to witness the last large-scale venture of the Saint-Domingue privateers, which was planned and carried out in a wave of panic.[47]

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A Last Venture

Regarding the privateers still at sea, Cussy knew only that those who were gone to Orinoco had taken Santo Tomás as planned but without large spoils. Cussy, being at Le Cap on the northern coast in mid-December, was advised that one Bréha (Pierre Bart), from Grammont's fleet, had just come in at Petit-Goâve with a Spanish prize.[48] The taking of this ship, *Nuestra Señora de Regla*, off Guantanamo, with a cargo of wine and European goods, was the only positive result of Grammont's entire voyage.[49] Indeed, on Christmas' Eve 1684, the privateer general himself dropped anchor at Petit-Goâve after almost six months of a useless and disastrous cruise. What had Grammont done during all this time? First, he had dispatched one of his own captains to Salt Tortuga, an island on the Venezuela coast that had been chosen as rendezvous prior to the raid on Caracas. He had so instructed Captain Andresson and Brouage (master of De Graff's vessel) whom he had met with off Havana, as planned.[50] He himself had then cruised for some time along the Cuba's northern coast in the company of four other ships, and then went to Florida. There he joined Captain Thomas Handley, general of an English fleet of six privateers, bearing commission of the governor of the Bahamas to protect those islands from Spanish attack. A storm prevented Grammont and Handley from carrying out their design

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[44] Deposition of John Thorp and James Wall, Jamaica, 25 Nov.-5 Dec. 1684, PRO CO 1/55 no. 89; see also "État et détail de l'affaire du sieur Jacques Duval, marchand de la Jamaïque," annotated by Bégon and Cussy, 1688, CAOM COL-C9A 1. De Graff was surely dispatched to find and arrest some Spanish privateers who plundered a plantation at Léogâne, killed some inhabitants, and took their slaves; for this aggression, committed while Saint-Laurent and Bégon were there, see their memorial to the King, 25 Jan. 1685, CAOM COL-F3 164.

[45] Raveneau de Lussan, *Journal du voyage fait à la mer du Sud avec les flibustiers de l'Amérique, en 1684 et années suivantes* (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1690), p. 7-8.

[46] Weddle, *The Wreck of the Belle*, p. 143.

[47] Declaration of Denis Thomas, Veracruz, 24 Oct. 1685, "Causa criminal."

[48] Saint-Laurent and Bégon to the king, 25 Jan. 1685, CAOM COL-F3 164.

[49] The *Regla* had been taken previously by French privateers under Van Hoorn in 1683, but the Spaniards retook her some weeks after the Veracurz raid. Details of her second capture by privateers, given by some 30 men involved in this action, are in "Causa Criminal."

[50] "Mémoire des pertes et exactions." See also Alexandre-Olivier Exquemelin, *Histoire des aventuriers flibustiers qui se sont signalés dans les Indes, etc.* (Paris: Jacques Le Febvre, 1699), vol. 1, p. 372-377 and vol. 2, p. 373-375.

against San Agustín, the Spanish capital of Florida.[51] As for the enterprise against Caracas, Grammont had given it up for the moment and, faithful to Cussy's orders, returned to Saint-Domingue before the end of the year.

Early in January 1685, Governor Cussy was advised of these failures; he briefly regretted having authorized this venture and appeared determined to grant no more commissions.[52] However, a too rigid attitude could drive several men to revolt and to take residence in foreign colonies, as the colonists had often threatened.[53] Indeed, few of the men who followed Grammont had made any profit in privateering since the famous Veracruz raid. Their associates, who were also their creditors, the planters and the merchants who had backed this fleet with supplies, stood to lose large sums.[54] For the sake of the colony, these privateers had to be successful in a sizable venture before the king prohibited hostilities against the Spaniards. Already news of impending peace in Europe had reached the West Indies, but the authenticating proclamation had not yet reached Saint-Domingue.[55] Cussy thus still had time to spare, but time was short. Upsetting rumors had begun to circulate concerning the eight hundred men who had vainly awaited Grammont at Salt Tortuga.

At the beginning of February 1685 Grammont and some other captains left for Ile à Vache, one of the oldest corsair rendezvous in the Caribbean Sea. The island was the obliged call for ships returning from Venezuela for Petit-Goâve. It lay just off the southern coast of Saint-Domingue, where there was a small French settlement from which the privateer general could recruit men for his next expedition. This new venture caused some dissatisfaction among planters who had no interest in it; furthermore, it would deprive them of workers at the height of the tobacco season.[56] Among the privateers also were some who did not share the enthusiasm of Cussy and his partner Grammont. Tired of privateering, Captain Pierre Bart, alias Bréha, wanted precisely to load his new ship *Regla* with tobacco and return to France. The governor, once back at Petit-Goâve, however, would not allow him to do so but forced him to take part in the expedition.[57] Then about 120 men, mostly French, went on board the *Regla*, better known to

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[51] J. Leitch Wright, Jr., "Andrew Ranson: Seventeenth Century Pirate," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1960-1961): 135-144; John E. Worth, *The Struggle for the Georgia Coast: An 18th Century Spanish retrospective on Guale and Mocama,* Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, no. 75 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 41-42. See also CSPCS, 1681-1685, nos. 1599, 1644. No word of Grammont's design on Florida appears in French archives.

[52] Abstract of letters, Cussy to Blénac, 7 Sept. 1684 and 8 Jan. 1685, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[53] This "seditious spirit" of Saint-Domingue's colonists is discussed in Charles Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: L'École, 1975).

[54] "Mémoire des pertes et exactions."

[55] The King to Blénac, Versailles, 24 Dec 1684, CAOM COL-B 11, f. 67. Order to publish the Peace at Saint-Domingue was issued four months later: Seignelay to Cussy and the king to Cussy, Versailles, 30 April 1685, ibid., ff. 144-145.

[56] "Mémoire des pertes et exactions." The authors of this anonymous document were surely among these dissatisfied planters. Though biased against Cussy, it brings out facts not mentioned elsewhere.

[57] Bart, declarations, Veracruz, 19 Oct. and 4 Nov. 1685, in "Causa Criminal," wherein his desire to return to France is confirmed by many of his men. Native of Brittany, he came to America as a sailor on one of d'Estrées' vessels lost off Aves Islands in May 1678. Rescued by Grammont's fleet, he took part in the Maracaibo expedition and soon thereafter was given command of a ship. About June 1679, he and another French captain made themselves masters of two small Cuban ships found working to salvage the wreck of the Spanish galleon *Maravillas* in the Bahamas. The two privateers took from the wreck a rich booty in silver bars. There followed two unsuccessful voyages around Cuba, the Bahamas, and Florida, ending in a failed attempt on San Agustín de la Florida in April 1683; another as part of De Graff's fleet, preying on the Cartagena coast, then a fifth voyage under Grammont's command. On Bart's career, see documents in CAOM COL-C9A 1 and others abstracted in CSPCS 1681-85.

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the privateers as *La Reglita*.[58] Among them was Denis Thomas, former volunteer on *Le Joli*, whom his new comrades, after hearing him talk so much of La Salle's expedition, nicknamed "Rose de Mississippi.[59] Toward the end of March, Governor Cussy himself went on board Bart's vessel to Ile à Vache, where he found Grammont and about ten other captains.[60] Among them was De Graff, back from Venezuela, who confirmed Cussy's worst fears. In the last days of 1684, at least two hundred privateers of those who had awaited Grammont at Salt Tortuga had resolved to go to the South Sea (Pacific Ocean) via the Isthmus of Panama, and several hundred more, left by De Graff on the Cartagena coast, intended to do likewise.[61] Cussy at once sent Grammont to Panama to prevent the privateers there from going to the South Sea. These privateers were to go with Grammont's fleet to seek a rich Spanish prize. The governor justified this new venture as reprisal for recent Spanish aggressions against Saint-Domingue; notably, a raid on a Léogane plantation the previous November. Accordingly, he granted new commissions.[62] Of these doings he wrote nothing to Seignelay for fear of the minister's (and the king's) adverse reaction. He falsified the date of Grammont's departure, placing it at the beginning of February, ahead of the March 18 expiration date for the commissions received previously from Blénac. Cussy also neglected to mention his meeting with the privateers at Ile à Vache.[63]

Departing from Ile à Vache, Grammont dispatched Bart (Bréha) and two other captains to the Colombian coast to get food, at the expense (as usual) of the small boats plying between Cartagena and Puerto Belo. He himself and the rest of his fleet headed for the Archipelago Gulf of San Blas. Upon his arrival, he sent a small ship to Golden Island, where the privateers intending to go to the South Sea to get reaccustomed themselves to land.[64] Meanwhile, on April 29, he fell on HMS *Ruby*, which had just escorted two Spanish slave vessels to Puerto Belo. Her captain, David Mitchell, held instructions from the Jamaica governor to destroy all English privateer ships found in the San Blas Archipelago. Among the four vessels accompanying Grammont, Mitchell recognized the largest as Bannister's and observed that she bore French colors. Citing his instructions, he asked Grammont's permission to seize her, referring also to an act of the Jamaica Assembly forbidding any resident of that island to serve at sea under a foreign commission. Grammont replied that Bannister had sold his vessel to Captain Duchesne and was only awaiting settlement. By way of proof, both Bannister and the buyer came on board Grammont's ship and produced a bill of sale for examination by Captain Mitchell's lieutenant. It was a

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[58] An analysis of the interrogatories of Bart's men in "Causa Criminal" gives the following breakdown: 27 who were with Bart on his previous voyage; 19 others who also had taken part in the 1684 campaign on other ships of Grammont's fleet; 21 crewmen of Captain Willems, who had seen La Salle's three ships at Petit-Goâve; 27 others, including Denis Thomas, who were on their first privateering voyage.

[59] Declaration of Pierre Miler, 26 Oct. 1685, "Causa Criminal."

[60] See "Causa Criminal" and "Mémoire des pertes et exactions." A colorful (but quite romanced) narrative of Cussy's last meeting with Grammont is in Exquemelin, *Histoire des aventuriers*, vol. 2, p. 379-382.

[61] See, among other sources, Raveneau, *Journal*, pp. 9-22; "Mémoire des pertes et exactions"; Exquemelin, *Histoire des aventuriers*, vol. 2, p. 373-378; and confession of Nicolas Brigaut, San Agustín, 30 May 1686, Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Mexico 616, ramo 1, n. 26-2. The Pacific Ocean became known as the South Sea upon its discovery by Vasco Núñez de Balboa, who was looking south from the Isthmus of Darién at the time. In the 1680s, a "Voyage to the South Sea" signified a privateering expedition against Spanish shipping and settlements on the Pacific coast.

[62] Declarations of Bart, 19 Oct. and 4 Nov. 1685, confirmed by those of most of his men, both in "Causa Criminal." See also the foregoing note 45.

[63] Cussy to Seignelay, 12 May 1685, CAOM COL-F3 164. Cussy was surely advised by his attorney (the Parisian businessman Gabriel Appoil) or others (e.g., Renaudot) that Louis XIV had to forbid privateering once and for all.

[64] See, among other declarations in "Causa Criminal" that of Julien Dejon, 19 Oct. 1685.

stratagem designed to deceive both the English officer and Cussy, who had refused Bannister a commission.[65]

Leaving the *Ruby*, Grammont and his captains went to their next rendezvous at Isla de Pinos (Pine Island, not to be confused with Cuba's Isla de Pinos). The small ship sent previously to the neighboring Golden Island returned to the fleet with bad news: at least six hundred French and English privateers had crossed the Isthmus on their way to the South Sea the previous February, leaving their scuttled ships along the north Panamanian shore.[66] This news was confirmed by Kunas Indians who lived in the Darién area and who had served as guides and auxiliaries to privateers crossing Panama since 1679.[67] Two of the principal Kunas chiefs and their wives went on board Grammont's vessel. While there, they were caught in a circumstance that might well have cost them their lives. Grammont learned that three captains of the privateer fleet—Jean Tristan, Bartholomew Sharpe, and John Markham—were plotting a voyage to the South Sea and to that end were hiring away all the men they could persuade. Advised of the plot, Grammont informed the rebellious captains that if they did not give up their design he would kill his Indian guests. Thereupon, Tristan and his two English accomplices were obliged to yield: had the threat been carried out, the privateers would have lost the Kunas' friendship forever.[68] Moreover, half a dozen men returning from Panama advised Grammont that the expedition to the South Sea had failed, which news served to deter the privateers from further aspirations in that direction.[69]

After this event, Bart and the two other captains previously sent to the Columbian coast for provisions joined their associates at Golden Island and then at Isla de Pinos; they had taken some pirogues laden with corn in the Bay of Sinu, south of the great port of Cartagena, but, among the neighboring islands of San Bernardo, they had fled from three Spanish ships which fired some cannon shots at them. The whole fleet then gathered at the Island of Pines; all the captains held council to decide on a target. Grammont proposed a second attempt on Veracruz. Most of the captains, led by De Graff and Bart, were opposed to it, pleading a lack of men and food. Furthermore, information from the crew of a captured Puerto Rican boat indicated that, since the raid of 1683, Veracruz had reinforced its defenses. Seeing himself in the minority, Grammont gave up his plan. A raid on Campeche, which offered provisions needed for a grander venture, was substituted.[70]

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[65] Molesworth to William Blathwayt, Jamaica, 15-25 May 1685, PRO CO 1/57, no. 126; also Cussy to Seignelay, Port-de-Paix, 13 Aug. 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1. From August 1684 to February 1685, Bannister was held prisoner in Jamaica. Awaiting his second trial for piracy, he had escaped to join Grammont at Ile à Vache. Other sources on him are cited in the foregoing note 36. In December 1684, Captain Mitchell came in at Petit-Goâve with instructions to apprehend Captains Bart (Bréha) and Willems (Yankey), who had committed small piracies against Jamaican sloops. Of course he was refused. See CSPCS 1681-1685, nos. 1958, 1964, 1991, 1992, 2000; also "État et détail de l'affaire du sieur Jacques Duval," 1688, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[66] "Causa Criminal." Afterward, these 600 men joined in the Gulf of Panama 400 more privateers, mostly English, who had come to the South Sea, either by land through the isthmus or via the Strait of Magellan. On this expedition, see among others sources, the entire Raveneau's Journal, as well as William Dampier, *A New Voyage round the World, etc.* (London: James Knapton, 1697).

[67] The history of their alliance is told in Dampier, *A New Voyage*, pp. 180-184. An apt study of this Indian people is Ignacio Gallup-Diaz, *The Door of the Seas and Key to the Universe: Indian Politics and Imperial Rivalry in the Darién, 1640-1750* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[68] Cussy, memorial, 13 Aug. 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1. In 1680, Captain Sharpe had been one of the pioneers of these South Sea's voyages, and Markham is said to have been one of his men.

[69] "Causa Criminal." Of course this news was false; Grammont probably influenced the testimony.

[70] See, among other declarations in "Causa Criminal," those of Bart, Dejon, João Tomás, François de Lion, Jean Antoine, and Jean Gonzague Duchemin, all in October, 1685.

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Late in May, Grammont and his captains weighed anchor. Once at sea, in the Gulf of Darién, they fell upon five galleons from Cartagena, bound for Puerto Belo. Becalmed at times, they stayed in sight of this powerful Spanish fleet for three days before a breeze arose that enabled them to steer clear of the galleons and continue on their way. Then, they went to the coast of Mosquitos (Nicaragua), where they gathered again and watered. From Mosquitos, they steered to the northern coast of Yucatán and thence toward their next rendezvous, Cape Catoche. On the way, Grammont sent captains Willems (Yankey) and Tocard to Isla Mujeres with orders to leave a message there for captains Andresson and Le Sage, commanders of two large ships, each carrying more than 350 men, whom he had expected to find near Cartagena. Reaching Mujeres about June 20, both messengers instead found Captain Sharpe, who undoubtedly had separated from the French fleet intentionally. He was brought back by force to their general at Cape Catoche.[71] There the fleet gathered one last time before setting sail for Campeche: twelve ships, carrying some thirteen hundred men.[72]

On July 7, 1685, between 800 and 1100 privateers led by Captains Grammont, De Graff, Willems, Tocard, and Sharpe landed at San Francisco de Campeche. In less than a week they made themselves masters of the town and its fortifications. They remained there until August 26 without taking significant spoils. Hence, parties were sent to plunder the surrounding countryside, and some privateers, meeting organized resistance, fell into Spanish hands. They were taken before the governor-general of Yucatán, Bruno Tello de Guzmán, in Mérida. In response, Grammont wrote to the Spanish official, demanding return of his men and a ransom for Campeche. Guzmán not only refused the demands, he put to death four of his prisoners. Grammont, in turn, ordered his men to behead five Spaniards, carefully chosen from among his own captives: men who had served on board corsairs fitted out from Campeche and elsewhere and had taken part in aggressions against the French. Grammont's privateers, angered not only by Guzmán's cruelty but also by the Spaniards' harsh treatment of privateers, traders, and logwood cutters in the Bay of Campeche in 1680, proceeded to burn the town.[73]

To some extent, Grammont had achieved his mission. As envisaged in the planning of the Nouvelle-Biscaye venture, the privateers had created a diversion by attacking the Spaniards in the Gulf of Mexico while La Salle was penetrating the Gulf to form a settlement in Spanish territory. Indeed, there is no doubt that the initial raid on Veracruz came from Cussy'secret instructions to the privateer general. Moreover, at Mérida, two of the French prisoners questioned by Governor Guzmán acknowledged under torture that their chiefs' design was to make themselves masters of the whole Gulf of Mexico. Grammont himself had said, before witnesses, that he would storm the fortress of San Juan de Ulúa, which defended Veracruz harbor, and

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[71] On this part of Grammont's voyage, the most revealing declaration in "Causa Criminal" is that of João Tomás, 21 Oct. 1685. Concerning Sharpe, see also the deposition of William Writt, Nevis, 30 Dec. 1686-9 Jan. 1687, PRO CO 1/61.

[72] Most of the sources give the number of ships as 12, including four large and two middle-sized vessels that had been at the Ile à Vache's rendezvous, viz. *The Golden Fleece* (Joseph Bannister), *Le Hardi* (sieur de Grammont), *Le Neptune* (Laurens de Graff), *La Dauphine* (Jan Willems, alias Yankey), *La Reglita* (Pierre Bart, alias Bréha) and *La Padarame* (Abraham Tocard). There were six smaller vessels under command of captains Duchesne, Jean Tristan, Nicolas Brigaut, Jacob Evertsen, Bartholomew Sharpe, and John Markham. Additionally, some small trading or fishing ships may have been enlisted on the fleet's way to Campeche.

[73] A good account of the taking and occupation of Campeche, based on documents preserved in Mexican archives, is in Hector Pérez Martínez, *Piraterías en Campeche*, (Mexico: Porrua Hnos y Cia, 1937), p. 54-61; see also "Causa Criminal." For the French view, see Cussy's memoir of 13 Aug. 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1; Exquemelin, *Histoire des aventuriers*, vol. 2, pp. 383-396.

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hold it for King Louis.[74] Released now from any responsibility, Grammont could once again put forward his own plan to raid Caracas, but only a few were now willing to follow their general; his reputation had suffered from the failure of his 1684 voyage. Moreover, Campeche's plunder had not even yielded enough to pay debts owed for supplies in Saint-Domingue. Aside from a great deal of corn and some logwood, most of the booty consisted of the Indians the privateers took to sell as slaves in Saint-Domingue and Jamaica. Captured shipping consisted of a half-galley and two frigates. The manner of sharing these spoils, especially the ships, caused friction among the captains. Grammont and De Graff quarreled over the possession of one of the frigates. Only the intervention of their men, who decided to offer the ship to Governor Cussy, prevented this dispute from escalating. Grammont also tried to remove from Captain Bart a sloop and its spoils: 20 Indians and the bells of the church of Campeche.[75]

Because of this infighting, the privateers were unable to agree on a new joint venture and broke apart. Captains Sharpe and Markham were the first to leave Campeche's roadstead. Bound for Carolina, they hoped to refit for a voyage to the South Sea through the Strait of Magellan.[76] On September 2, De Graff, Bart, and two others sailed for Isla de Mujeres, where they intended to take on wood and water. Grammont and the rest of the fleet shortly followed them. On September 11, between Alacrán Reefs and Cape Catoche, De Graff and his fellow captains encountered the Armada de Barlovento, the fleet charged with protecting Spanish coastal settlements and shipping in the Gulf and the Caribbean. The Armada gave chase, concentrating their fire on the *Reglita*, which was slowed by the sloop she had in tow: the one her captain had refused to yield to Grammont. Quickly overpowered by his enemies, Bart surrendered on promise of quarter for himself and his men, granted by Admiral Antonio de Astina, second-in-command of the Armada. On September 14, the two largest Spanish vessels overtook De Graff, but the Dutchman put up a fierce resistance. Calms in the evening enabled his escape. Some days later, the captain-general of the Armada succumbed to illness. He was succeeded by Admiral Astina, who called off the pursuit. Toward the end of the month, he reached Veracruz with *Reglita* as his prize and her crew.[77]

For about two weeks after October 19, Bart and his men were interrogated in Admiral Astina's presence. In addition to their piracies, they revealed what they knew of La Salle's expedition, though only Denis Thomas provided firsthand information.[78] Their declarations were sent to the viceroy, in Mexico City, Conde de Paredes, Marqués de la Laguna, who referred the charge of piracy to the auditor Marmolejo. This viceregal adviser at first alleged that Admiral Astina had treated the pirates with excessive generosity. On the basis of a royal Spanish decree of February 1685, he claimed the admiral lacked authority to grant quarter. By the same decree,

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[74] The interrogatories of these two French prisoners at Merida are abstracted in Martínez, *Piraterías*, p. 57-58; for Grammont's design on San Juan de Ulúa, see declarations of Lorenzo de Rojas, Marcos Zapata, Jean Antoine and Antoine Vouvier, 20, 21, 22, and 24 Oct. 1685, "Causa Criminal."

[75] See "Causa Criminal"; Martínez, *Piraterías*, pp. 56-57; memoir of Cussy, 13 Aug. 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1; De Graff to Seignelay, Ile à Vache, 1 April 1688, CAOM COL-F3 165.

[76] Confession of Brigaut, 30 May 1686, AGI Mexico 616; Cussy memoir, 13 Aug. 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1; and declaration of Marcos Zapata, 21 Oct. 1685, "Causa Criminal."

[77] Concerning the armada and this particular action, see Bibiano Torres Ramírez, *La Armada de Barlovento* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1981). See also Cussy's memoir of 13 Aug. 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1; De Graff to Seignelay, 1 April 1688, CAOM COL-F3 165; and "Causa Criminal."

[78] Declarations of 118 privateers, taken to Veracruz, 19 Oct. to 3 Nov. 1685, "Causa Criminal." Less than forty of them had really seen La Salle's vessels at Petit-Goâve, and the most part then belonged to Captain Willems's company. For the Spanish expeditions later sent from New Spain to seek La Salle's settlement, see Robert S. Weddle, *Wilderness Manhunt: The Spanish search for La Salle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973).

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he recommended a death sentence for Bart as commander of a privateer in peacetime, as well as in that of the seasoned pirates among the other captives. Accordingly, in December, the Frenchman was hanged in Veracruz with five of his men who had taken part in the raid on that city in 1683. Four others, Spanish subjects adjudged traitors, shared their fate. The one hundred remaining crewmen of the *Reglita* were sentenced to serve ten years in the Spanish galleys.[79] In fact, they remained in the Veracruz vicinity, where they were employed at hard labor. Some of them escaped, and others died in captivity. The rest regained their freedom only in the last years of the century.[80]

Meanwhile, Grammont, De Graff and the other captains, having gathered at Isla de Mujeres, sent two or three of them to Saint-Domingue, then went to Roatán Island, in the Gulf of Honduras, a convenient place for careening their ships. There, in February 1686, they received Governor Cussy's orders: they were to return to Saint-Domingue by the following June to disarm,[81] since the king forbade further hostilities against the Spaniards.[82] The governor seemed resolved to enforce this prohibition; even before receiving the royal order, he had arrested Captain Andresson and seized his ship, which Grammont had expected to join his fleet. Another captain who had played the rogue on West Africa's coasts had the same fate.[83] Under the terms of the order, the privateers were encouraged to become planters. Small comfort; their services might be needed for the conquest of Santo Domingo, should the Spanish governor fail to keep the peace and refused the French free trade. In that case Cussy could grant new commissions, even though he was required first to refer the whole matter to the king, who could allow or disallow commissions, as well as an expedition against the Spanish colony.[84] Promises made to the main privateer leaders, Grammont and De Graff, appeared to be better; Governor Cussy had asked for them royal offices in the colony, but these rewards arrived too late, at least for Grammont.[85] Most of the men, having been at sea for almost three years without profit, cared little for royal orders and promises of rewards; they obliged their chiefs to continue privateering. Being hardly wealthier than the crewmen, the captains and other officers did not need much persuading, but they still did not get along on a joint venture. Apparently De Graff would have liked to make a voyage to the South Sea, at least to plunder Río de la Plata (Argentina). As for Grammont, he wanted to ally himself with the English of Carolina and to attack the capital of Florida,[86] but both these aspirations failed with quite different results. Grammont perished in a storm off the Azores in October 1686, possibly on his way to the South Sea. De Graff, on the

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[79] Francisco Fernández de Marmolejo to the Viceroy, Mexico, 26 Nov. 1685, "Causa Criminal." Besides their captain, those nine who suffered death were the Frenchmen Julien Dejon, Louis Normand, Saint-Jacques, François de Lion, the Portuguese João Tomás, the Spaniard Jorge del Castillo, and the Spanish mulattos Lorenzo de Rojas, Marcos Zapata, and Joseph Rangel.

[80] Cussy to Seignelay, 27 Aug. 1687, 3 May and 21 Aug. 1688, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[81] Cussy memoir, 13 Aug. 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1; see also deposition of Pierre Lagarde, Martinique, 9 Jan. 1687, CAOM COL-C8A 4, ff. 414-416, and confession of Brigaut, 30 May 1686, AGI, Mexico 616.

[82] King to Cussy, Versailles, 30 April 1685, CAOM COL-B 11, f. 145.

[83] Cussy to Seignelay, Le Cap, 18 Oct. 1685 and Port-de-Paix, 10 Jan. 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[84] Seignelay to Cussy, Versailles, 30 April and 13 Aug. 1685, CAOM COL-B 11, ff. 144, 183-186; Cussy to the president of Santo Domingo, January 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[85] Blénac and Dumaitz de Goimpy to the king, 30 Sept. 1685, CAOM COL-C8A 4; also "Commission de lieutenant de roi à la côte Saint-Domingue pour le sieur de Grammont," 1 Oct., 1686; "Brevet de major à la côte de Saint-Domingue pour le sieur Laurens [De Graff]," Versailles, 30 Sept. 1686, CAOM COL-B 12, ff. 117-118.

[86] Confession of Brigaut, 30 May 1686, AGI, Mexico 616.

other hand, lost his vessel on the coast of Cartagena but returned in October of the following year to Saint-Domingue. There he was advised of his appointment as king's major, in which capacity, he was sent by Cussy to command at île à Vache.[87]

Conclusion

Already Cussy had advised Seignelay that the voyage of some 500 French privateers to the South Sea was in part a response to news of the peace: these men would not dare return if denied opportunity to take the spoils needed to pay debts they had incurred in the colony. The king recognized too late the importance of the privateers: they must be preserved for Saint-Domingue and future royal ventures to Spanish America.[88] In March 1687, Cussy exceeded his new instructions by proclaiming a general amnesty in Saint-Domingue and also in Jamaica. In truth, hardly two hundred privateers, most of them belonging to De Graff's company, surrendered within the six-month term of the amnesty.[89] The damage was already done. In spite of the return of another two hundred men from the South Sea in 1688, Cussy himself accounted the losses at more than five hundred dead, in addition to those still alive who, for various reasons, would never return to Saint-Domingue.[90] For a long time, he had tried to protect the privateers and to overlook their actions, for which Seignelay himself had reproached him.[91] In answer, the governor claimed credit for having arrested and put to death privateers who had become pirates. Nevertheless, he let several of those who had surrendered set out again for the South Sea or other remote regions: those whom he himself or his lieutenants had an interest in fitting out.[92] The governor had wanted to satisfy everyone, but he had sown dissatisfaction everywhere. In addition to his complicity with the privateers, one now denounced his partnership with some captains of Saint-Malo who traded with the Spaniards to the detriment of the colonists of Saint-Domingue. Yet Cussy had won supporters among Seignelay's own entourage.[93] In spite of his own prevarication, he had carried out the royal orders: he had destroyed—if not considerably weakened—privateering. At the threshold of a new war against Spain, he complained bitterly of the perceived injustice.[94] Never again would Saint-Domingue be able to make up privateer fleets as strong and powerful as those of the early 1680's. During King William's war (1688-1697), when the main enemy was the English, the role of the French privateers was reduced more than ever to the role of the French Royal Navy's auxiliaries.: They were also confined to the role of wealth-providers for Jean-Baptiste Ducasse, Cussy's successor, who inserted himself as the business leader of French privateering in the West Indies. And, just like their former English comrades, the more rebellious of them moved their activities to the Indian Ocean and, as pirates, plundered the rich vessels of all nations.[95]

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[87] Memoir and letter of Cussy, 3 May 1688, CAOM COL-C9A 1; deposition of Lagarde, 9 Jan. 1687, CAOM COL-C8A 4; and De Graff to Seignelay, 1 April 1688, CAOM COL-F3 165.

[88] Seignelay to Cussy, Versailles, 30 Sept 1686, CAOM COL B-12, ff. 102-105; Cussy's reply in letters of 18 Oct. 1685 and 10 Jan. 1686, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[89] Cussy to Seignelay, Port-de-Paix, 27 Aug. 1687, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[90] Cussy to Seignelay, 3 May, 3 June, and 21 Aug. 1688, CAOM COL-C9A 1.

[91] Seignelay to Cussy, Versailles, 25 June, 9 July, and 25 Aug. 1687, CAOM COL-B 13, ff. 22-23, 25-26, 94-97.

[92] Cussy to Seignelay, Le Cap, 3 May 1688, CAOM COL-C9A 1; Jacques Gasser, "Des Antilles à la Réunion: le capitaine Isaac Veyret dit Desmaretz," *Bulletin du Cercle généalogique de Bourbon*, nos 38, 39, 40, 41 (1992-93).

[93] "Mémoire des pertes et exactions".

[94] Cussy to his attorney Appoil, Port-de-Paix, 24 Aug 1689, CAOM COL-C9A 2.

[95] For privateering under Ducasse (1691-1698), see Philippe Hroedej, "La flibuste domingoise à la fin du XVIIe siècle," and Hroedi, "L'amiral Du Casse: de la marchandise à la Toison d'Or," *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'ouest* 104 (1997), no 4, pp. 23-40. For East Indian ventures, see Gasser, "Des Antilles à la Réunion."

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